

HCS SB 607 -- PUBLIC ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS

SPONSOR: Sater (Franklin)

COMMITTEE ACTION: Voted "Do Pass with Amendments" by the Standing Committee on Children and Families by a vote of 8 to 3. Voted "Do Pass with HCS" by the Select Committee on Social Services by a vote of 8 to 1.

This bill requires the Department of Social Services, by January 1, 2017, to contract with a private vendor to verify that eligibility requirements are being met by recipients of public assistance, including Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP); Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF); Child Care Assistance; and MO HealthNet. The department will retain final determination of eligibility. The department and the contractor are required to file an annual report with the Governor and the General Assembly regarding the eligibility data.

The bill permits the Department of Social Services to utilize best clinical practices to achieve cost efficacy when administering the MO HealthNet pharmacy program.

This bill is similar to SCS HB 1795 (2016), SCS HCS HB 796 (2015), HB 985 (2015), HCS SCS SB 35 (2015), HCS SCS SB 322 (2015), and HCS SCS SB 38 (2015).

PROPONENTS: Supporters say that this bill would increase efficiency, reduce fraud and free up caseworkers to focus on more important aspects of their jobs. The contractors considered under this bill would have access to more advanced technology and private databases in order to obtain information about an individual receiving or applying for assistance. This information would assist the department in determining the individual's eligibility. The contractor would only be responsible for providing data, the department would still make all eligibility decisions.

Testifying for the bill were Senator Sater; Maximus; and the Missouri Alliance For Freedom.

OPPONENTS: Those who oppose the bill say that there is little evidence of fraud under the current system. There is always a risk that the contractor would have a financial incentive to cut off access to health coverage or other benefits. There is no guarantee that the contractor would be more efficient or more accurate in its data collection than the department.

Testifying against the bill was the Missouri Association For Social Welfare.